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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSC LOWERS TELEPHONE RELAY SURCHARGE TO FIVE CENTS

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Public Service Commission took action Tuesday, April 4, to reduce the monthly surcharge that supports the statewide Telecommunications Relay System by two cents. The reduction will take effect July 1.

The relay service enables speech and hearing-impaired persons to use the telecommunications network. The surcharge also funds the Commission's equipment distribution program, which provides specialized equipment necessary for impaired persons to use the relay system.

The surcharge applies to all access lines in Nebraska, whether they are landline or wireless. Nebraskans have paid a seven-cents per month surcharge for three years. Seven cents also was the surcharge in the relay system's first year of 1991.

In the intervening years, the surcharge has fluctuated between five cents and a high of 10 cents with the low of five cents assessed for three years from 1999 through 2001.

The Commission's vote came on the recommendation of staff analysts and the Commission's Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Committee, both of which proposed the monthly reduction of two cents.

Commission Chairman Lowell Johnson of North Bend said the five cents per month surcharge will enable the relay service to maintain an appropriate reserve fund of about three months. Johnson indicated that projections also included such factors as growth in the number of access lines in use as well as costs to operate the system.

The Nebraska Telecommunications Relay System is operated under contract with Hamilton Telecommunications, headquartered in Aurora. The relay system may be accessed by anyone in Nebraska by dialing 7-1-1.

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